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Conference Abstract

Building a community of practice through capacity enhancement mentoring

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Abstract

In 2015, GBIF—the Global Biodiversity Information Facility—officially started Biodiversity Information for Development, or BID, a multi-year, €3.9 million programme funded by the European Union with the aim of increasing the amount of biodiversity information available for use in scientific research and policymaking in the nations of sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Components of this programme include building a community of practice by offering capacity enhancement workshops in the areas of data mobilization and data application; developing activities and materials to strengthen a base of mentors and trainers; establishing helpdesk support and technical assistance for funded projects; and matchmaking to provide mentoring support to the funded projects.

The GBIF Secretariat recruited its mentors through an open call as a first step toward developing a community willing to share their knowledge. The main role of the mentors, either through online or on-site support, is to serve as a bridge between the researchers and collections professionals working on projects funded by BID and the broader biodiversity data community. The mentors receive recognition for their contributions through

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an open badging system and are listed in an online community directory. These mentors represent a wide range of backgrounds and experience in leadership, planning, digitization, data quality, data publishing, data application, and informatics support.

The GBIF Secretariat seeks to expand and develop the mentor programme and to sustain it beyond the BID-funded programme. We will explore the existing mentor programme, challenges associated with bridging cultures, challenges with providing language support, and ideas for improvement and expansion. We welcome discussion from the wider biodiversity community on how capacity enhancement mentoring can become a recognized activity to narrow knowledge gaps between various groups of biodiversity professionals.

Keywords

mentoring, capacity enhancement, community of practice

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